

Message Text

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15

ACTION PM-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03 NSC-10

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2409

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 0464

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, UK, IO, AS

SUBJ: ALSOP ARTICLE ON DIEGO GARCIA

REF: STATE 012770

1. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT DEPARTMENT PROVIDE EMBASSY
WITH CURRENT GUIDANCE FOR RESPONSE TO POSSIBLE PRESS
QUESTIONS.

2. STORY ABOUT U.S.-BRITISH DISCUSSIONS ON UPGRADING
USEFULNESS OF DIEGO GARCIA FOR MILITARY ACTIVITIES APPEARED
IN AUSTRALIAN JAN. 23. ARTICLE WRITTEN BY ROY MACARTNEY
REPEATED MUCH OF SUBSTANCE CONTAINED ALSOP ARTICLE WITH
ADDED MENTION OF AUSTRALIAN DEVELOPMENT OF NAVAL FACILITY
AT COCKBURN SOUND. TWO EDITORIALS APPEARED JAN. 24 IN
AUSTRALIAN AND SYDNEY MORNING HERALD NEWSPAPERS WHICH
IMPLY NEED FOR MORE RAPID DEVELOPMENT OF COCKBURN SOUND THAN
1978 TARGET NOW ENVISAGED BY GOA. IN THIS CONTEXT COCKBURN
SOUND IS EMPHASIZED AS FACILITY WHICH COULD PROVIDE NEEDED
SUPPORT FACILITIES FOR USN SHIPS OPERATION IN INDIAN OCEAN.

3. TENOR OF EDITORIALS MENTIONED ABOVE IS GENERALLY
POSITIVE TO US-UK PLANS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF
DIEGO GARCIA. AUSTRALIAN IN PARTICULAR EMPHASIZES
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STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF U.S. PRESENCE IN INDIAN OCEAN

AND CONCLUDES IT IS IN AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL INTEREST TO SUPPORT SUCH A PRESENCE TO BALANCE INCREASED SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE. ALL OF THIS HOWEVER IS IN CONTEXT, AS ALSOP ARTICLE IS OF REOPENING SUEZ CANAL AND DOES NOT IMPLY THAT AUSTRALIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD USN PRESENCE IN INDIAN OCEAN AT PRESENT TIME SHOULD BE DIFFERENT. BOTH EDITORIALS INDICATE HOPE THAT RECENT BARNARD VISIT TO WASHINGTON SUCCEEDED IN AT LEAST DISCUSSING INDIAN OCEAN AND IMPORTANCE THAT NORTHWEST CAPE STATION MIGHT HAVE IN FUTURE BIG POWER RIVALRY THERE. RELUCTANT CONCLUSION DRAWN BY AUSTRALIAN EDITORIAL IS THAT AUSTRALIA APPEARS AGAIN TO BE IN POSITION OF NEEDING US DEFENSE SUPPORT AND US PRESENCE IN THIS AREA.

4. ANTICIPATE CONTINUING INTEREST THIS SUBJECT FROM VARIOUS POLITICAL VIEWPOINTS. WE WOULD THEREFORE APPRECIATE CURRENT GUIDANCE AND ANY AMENDMENTS THERETO AS THEY DEVELOP FOR USE WITH PRESS AND PUBLIC INQUIRIES EXPECTED IN CANBERRA.
HARROP

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